United Nations A/70/895

General Assembly

Distr.: General
23 May 2016

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventieth session
Agenda items 37 and 38

The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Letter dated 19 May 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I write to you today regarding an issue that has been already raised by the Chairs of the Group of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), on behalf of their respective member States, in letters conveyed on 18 May 2016 to you about the display of a panel depicting Occupied East Jerusalem as "The Spiritual and Physical Capital of the Jewish People" as part of a larger provocative Israeli exhibit at the United Nations in New York.

While we had hoped that the collective, multilateral approach undertaken by the Group of Arab States and OIC would have resulted in the rectification of the situation, it regrettably has not as of today, obliging us to once again draw your attention to the matter, to express our vehement rejection of such a depiction and to reiterate the calls made by the Group of Arab States and OIC for the removal of the provocative panel on Jerusalem. We must add that any references to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which purport to assert Israeli sovereignty over this land, must also be removed from the exhibit.

The display of such depictions at the United Nations is not only provocative, but is also legally, politically and morally incorrect and unacceptable, directly challenging the applicable international rules and legislation, including, inter alia, the prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force. Countless Security Council and General Assembly resolutions have clearly determined that East Jerusalem and the rest of the Palestinian territory and other Arab lands occupied by Israel in June 1967 remain occupied and that in no way has Israel become sovereign over these territories.

The Security Council and the General Assembly have clearly rejected Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem, have condemned all policies and practices by Israel, the occupying Power, that deem to alter the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied

Please recycle

Palestinian Territory and have deemed all such policies and practices to be null and void in accordance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law. Moreover, the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, has also, in its advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, reaffirmed the illegality of such Israeli measures and reaffirmed the status of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as occupied, deeming Israel's status and obligations to be only those of an occupying Power, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention, other relevant rules of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

I wish to draw attention in particular to the provisions of Security Council resolution 478 (1980) of 20 August 1980, among other relevant resolutions, by which the Council:

- Reaffirmed "that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible"
- Censured "in the strongest terms the enactment by Israel of the 'basic law' on Jerusalem and the refusal to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions"
- Affirmed that the enactment "constitutes a violation of international law and does not affect the continued application of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem"
- Determined "that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the recent 'basic law' on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith"

Permitting Israel, the occupying Power, to display such a panel is totally incompatible with, and in violation of, such a clear legal determination by the Security Council and contravenes the obligations and responsibilities of the United Nations, which has repeatedly reaffirmed, through its principal organs, the legal status of East Jerusalem as occupied and as an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

We thus express our strong objection to such an exhibit of misleading and inappropriate depictions of Jerusalem, which negate the Palestinian existence in the city as well as its historical Arab, Muslim and Christian identity and heritage over the centuries, along with negating the applicable rules of international law. As we solemnly observe in these days the sixty-eighth anniversary of *Al-Nakba* of 1948, which tragically befell the Palestinian people and from which they continue to gravely suffer to this day, such an exhibit is furthermore viewed as extremely insensitive to their history and ongoing plight and as extremely provocative.

Accordingly, we respectfully call upon you, as have the States members of OIC and the Group of Arab States, both of which the State of Palestine is a member, to undertake the measures necessary for the removal of the aforementioned panel. Such a display at the United Nations is an affront to us and the rest of the overwhelming majority of Member States that respect international law and relevant resolutions regarding this longstanding conflict and injustice, for which the United

Nations has a permanent responsibility until it is justly and satisfactorily resolved in all its aspects.

I would be grateful if you could arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 37 and 38.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.